

Ephesians Series

17 Submit to one another (Sermon Notes) Ephesians 5:32-6:9

This sermon was preached in connection with the Spiritual Life series on Spiritual Relationships

Sometimes we say that Christianity is a living relationship with a living God. It's a good claim because when we come to Christ, the Spirit of God doesn't just transform us from death to life, but we are adopted into God's family. We enter into a family relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit.

I've said before that Jesus summed up the law and commandments in just two phrases - that the Jews called the Two Words or Two Commandments.

What are these commandments about? They're about love - in other words, relationship. Our relationship to God is not one of law - do this or face the consequences; it's one of attitude - I seek to please God because I love Him. Relationship.

We considered God's will for us last week. As we look at these verses we see the cornerstone of God's will for us - love.

5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

In many parts of the NT, particularly in John's letters we see the importance but we also see that coming through as we have looked through Ephesians. That seems to be the cornerstone of our theme for this morning - Submit to one another. If we are loved, we love and show reverence to God in it so:

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Submit - what does it mean? It certainly isn't very PC to submit. Here's the run-down on the Greek:

hupotasso (hoop-ot-as'-so)

AV - put under 6, be subject unto 6, be subject unto 5, submit (one's) self unto 5, submit (one's) self to 3, be in subjection unto 2, put in subjection under 1, misc 12; 40

1) to arrange under, to subordinate 2) to subject, put in subjection 3) to subject one's self, obey

4) to submit to one's control 5) to yield to one's admonition or advice 6) to obey, be subject

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A Greek military term meaning "to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader". In non-military use, it was "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden".

It means to co-operate, assume responsibility for one another, giving way to them, carrying their burdens.

This led to some hard questions for the Ephesians. This is because society is not equal. How can we submit to one another when there appear to be unequal relationships and Paul gives us three examples - Husbands and Wives, Parents and Children and Servants and Masters.

1 .Husband - Wife

Much debated passage. Difference in demands that the Lord makes on husbands and wives in marriage. Wives submit to your husbands - not liked by a lot of wives and loved by a lot of husbands.

Common in that society but less so in this for men to demand submission from their wives. However there are societies around the world where that is still the case. What of Christian marriage?

"Wives submit to your husbands" - there it is and you can't get away from it. If you are a Christian wife, that is what you are called to do unto the Lord.

Paul gives us the reason for it

23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

It's a picture of Christ and the Church. Many women in churches find that one difficult to cope with but men, that doesn't give you the right to lord that over your wives to act superior : this is about authority rather than superiority. Remember this comes under a heading of Submit to one another.

Look down.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- 30 for we are members of his body.

There is much more about the responsibilities of MEN in this passage than women. Why? Because too often it is MEN that abuse marriage. God may see them as being the head of the women in marriage, but they have a Christ-like responsibility - to love their wives.

And what did Christ do for His Church? He died for it. Therefore the Husband's responsibility is to love and care for his wife to the point of DEATH!. In giving Himself up for it, Christ put our welfare before His. Now us men are called to do the same. So therefore, men who lord it over their wives and take them for granted, treat them as servants, don't listen to their opinions, don't need their needs and expect attendance to be danced around them are not treating their wives as Christ treats the Church - in fact they are being selfish, which is the reverse of agape - love.

Wives similarly, a call to submission is also a call against selfishness and not putting your needs in front of your husband.

Same thing different route - wives submit out of reverence to Christ, husbands love as Christ loved the Church - result unselfish behaviour by both parties.

29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery-- but I am talking about Christ and the church.

We are given this simple model of marriage. Marriage is a partnership not between unequals, but between people who God has made different, and whose existence mirrors Christ's relationship with His people. But it goes further which is where submission to one another comes in. If women are called to submit and men called to love as Christ loved the Church, then marriage is a giving to one another - the two become one flesh - as single unit bound together. The best Christian marriages where the husband and wife give to one another - where they put each other first.

2. Children - Parents

6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honour your father and mother"-- which is the first commandment with a promise-- 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." 4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Children honour your parents - it's in the 10 commandments. It's part of the fabric of human life. Honour is about respect and loyalty and is a lifetime thing - so it isn't just limited to our childhood. Many of you understand that as you have cared for or do care for elderly relatives. We have responsibilities to them.

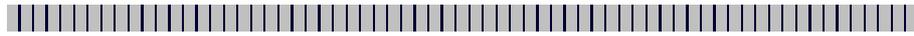
But as before, how do we look at this in terms of a PARENT'S responsibility. *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.* We have a responsibility to encourage them to fear the Lord as we do. Don't exasperate them. Particularly true if your child is an adult. Teenagers are easily exasperated - but that is a product of lack of honour. But what if a parent is abusive and an exasperation to a child, particularly an adult child who is seeking to honour them. We have a responsibility to our children, whatever our age to give them the benefit of our experience and wisdom. Some Christian parents often fail to respect that. Submit to one another - we have responsibility as to the Lord.

3. Slaves/Masters. (Employers/Employees).

Interesting one this as not many of you actually work. Slavery as such was not the issue here. But in terms of society there were those who were "superior" masters and those who were "inferior" slaves. How does submit to one another work here?

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. 9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with him.

To the slaves - serve as you were serving the Lord not the master. That can be hard when you are in a dead-end job. Masters - treat them in the same way - you have a master in heaven. Your responsibility is to God and that controls how you treat people.



Submit to one another. As a Church we have started doing that. But as God's people we need to develop relationships in the same way that God has relationship to us.

And what is that relationship?

Obviously Unequal - in power, holiness and abilities. The contrast could not be greater. When we compare ourselves to the incomparable God Well we can't!

Yet - God came to where we are in Christ. He showed the greatest submission when He let Himself be taken by wicked men and crucified. We know His love, mercy and forgiveness through that act of submission.

Let's show love, mercy and forgiveness to others. Put their needs before ours.

In all our relationships, what matters most is that we value and treat others as God in Christ would, for Love, God's Love, is the greatest of all

"God will never ask you if you worked no matter what, but He will ask you if you loved no matter what."

Father,
thank you for loving me and showing me how to love others. Help me to relate to those around me as You would. May Your Spirit make me a blessing to others, and may I fulfill your will to love others even as Christ has loved me! Amen.